

House Committee on Commerce - February 27, 2007

Presenter Biographies

Ron Kitchens, CEO, Southwest Michigan First, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Ron Kitchens became the CEO of Southwest Michigan First, a Kalamazoo-based 501C 3 private non-profit economic development organization, in 2005. Ron has nearly 20 years of experience in Economic Development, and has worked as the CEO of Economic Development organizations in Missouri and Texas. He also has broad-based experience as a businessman, city administrator, elected official and U.S. Senate staff member, giving him a unique perspective on how to improve a region's economic base. Ron is among the three percent of economic development officials in the nation who have earned the Certified Economic Developer designation.

Chris Schauer, CEO, PharmOptima, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Chris Schauer is the CEO of PharmOptima, a contract research organization founded in 2003 by a group of senior discovery and research scientists from Pharmacia. Prior to joining PharmOptima, Mr. Schauer served as the Principal and Founder of Christian Partners, a private consulting firm focused on industrial turnaround opportunities. Throughout his career, he has served on numerous professional committees and boards.

Mr. Schauer received his B.B.A in business administration and accounting from Western Michigan University, and currently serves on the Board of Directors of Griffith Laboratories Worldwide, Inc. and Windquest Companies, Inc. Mr. Schauer also serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

Dr. Douglas Norton, Ph.D., CEO, PharmMor Consulting, LLC

Douglas R. Morton, Jr. is a consultant in the life sciences sector, working with a variety of for-profit and non-profit organizations. From 2003-2006, he was the CEO of Southwest Michigan Innovation Center, an incubator/accelerator located in Kalamazoo that provides wet-laboratory space, access to venture funding, and business services to emerging companies in the life sciences arena. Dr. Morton spent the majority of his career in the pharmaceutical industry, joining the Upjohn Company as a research scientist in 1973. He remained through Upjohn's merger with Pharmacia AB (in 1996), the consolidation of Pharmacia & Upjohn with Monsanto (in 2000), and, recently, Pharmacia's merger with Pfizer (2003), serving in a series of increasingly significant discovery research management positions.

Dr. Morton holds an A.B. degree in chemistry from Kenyon College and a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from Columbia University. He completed postdoctoral studies in organic chemistry at Stanford University.

Dean Knuth, President and CEO, Jasper Clinic, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Dean Knuth is President and CEO of Jasper Clinical Research & Development, Inc., a phase I clinical pharmacology unit specializing in exploratory clinical R&D. Mr. Knuth has more than 25 years experience in the industry. He is a member of the board of ClinXus, a Michigan alliance for innovative clinical research. He has knowledge of analytical chemistry, pharmacokinetics/dynamics, biomarkers and pharmacogenetics. At Pharmacia he directed the incorporation of new targets and assay technologies into clinical pharmacology projects from early clinical research through full drug development to life cycle management.

Mr. Knuth is a lifelong Michigan resident and a graduate of Kalamazoo College. Throughout his career he has served on numerous professional committees and panels.